

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson Jr. today submitted requests for federal funding for two major Metra commuter rail projects in the Chicago Southland:

- * the new Metra Southeast Service, which will run from Chicago to Crete, and;

- * an extension of the Metra Electric line from University Park to the proposed Abraham Lincoln Airport site.

"These are exciting times. These two commuter rail enhancements will help tie the Southland into the rest of the regional economy, and provide long overdue service improvements to residents living in South Cook and Will Counties," Jackson said.

"Today I submitted both new-start rail projects as Congressional High Priority Projects in the new Transportation Equity Act (TEA) proposal. As priority projects, both will be eligible for federal transit funds once the bill is enacted this year," said Jackson, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. Today was the deadline for submitting TEA road and rail projects.

Jackson noted that both projects are supported by the Illinois Department of Transportation, Metra and the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, which represents 42 suburbs.

"Metra and IDOT have done the preliminary studies for both lines and found them to be vital to improving transportation needs in the Chicago region," Jackson said. "The Southeast Service has long been a priority of Metra. And with Governor Blagojevich's endorsement of the Abraham Lincoln National Airport proposal last week, it's time to start planning a transit link to the airport as well." Jackson called the two rail projects "the Southland Initiative."

"The airport link is important. While it may seem premature, we cannot afford to wait six or seven years for the next TEA bill to start the planning process," Jackson said.

Jackson Seeks Federal Funds for Two Metra Projects

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The federal TEA bills fund long-term highway and transit projects over a six- or seven-year cycle. Cost estimates for the projects are \$300 million for the airport extension and \$500 million for the Southeast Service, he said.